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# THE BIBLICAL WORLD

CONTINUING

## *The Old and New Testament Student*

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THE unity of the Bible has doubtless sometimes been maintained in a sense unwarranted by facts. Unity defined as uniformity and conceived as excluding all progress in revelation the historical student of the Bible fails to find. All the more, therefore, ought he to be most forward in recognizing the true unity which actually exists, a unity which discovers itself alike in the progress of thought with which biblical theology has to do, and in the relations of events with which the historian deals. No historical fact can be better established than that the history of the New Testament church and that of Old Testament Israel are vitally connected, parts of one continuous historical current.

WE speak sometimes of the four centuries of silence, and some have perhaps received the impression that there is a great gap between the literature of the Old Testament and that of the New. This gap in the literature is probably not as long as it was once supposed to be. But though it were four centuries long, though through four hundred years the voice of prophecy had been silent and the pens of the scribes unused, it would not follow that the currents of history had been broken off, and that there was no connection between the life of the Israel of Nehemiah's day and the Israel of John the Baptist's time. Nor do the facts of history give evidence of any such separation between the two

periods. In the first place there are links of divine thought connecting the two periods and bridging the gap between them. In Christ and his church are wonderfully realized the ideals of which the prophets dreamed. On him converge the several somewhat distinct lines of hope and prediction discernible in the Old Testament, but seemingly unrelated in the prophetic thought. This culmination in him of ideals and predictions uttered centuries before, itself constitutes a chain of connection between the earlier history and the later. But the unity is not only that which is constituted by a bridge of thought thrown across a great period of comparative silence and obscurity. There is a continuity also of life and of living thought. The history of Israel is one because the life of Israel is one. The Israel of our Lord's day was what it was in no small part because of the forces that were operative in the days of the Maccabees, and the Maccabean history has its roots in the Old Testament.

THOUGH the New Testament writers have little to say explicitly concerning this inter-biblical age, yet they expressly recognize the continuity of the life of Israel from the Old Testament days to their own time. The nation for whose salvation Paul travails in soul is the Israel "whose is the adoption, and the glory and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom is Christ, as concerning the flesh." It was in the fullness of time that Christ came, not after a four-century break in the continuity of divine activity in Israel's history, nor as an afterthought, the divine purpose respecting Israel having been suffered for four centuries to lie dormant. The forces that made those particular days the fullness of time were not solely those which had been at work in the days of Moses and David and Isaiah and Malachi; they included also and of necessity some which were operative down to the very time at which Christ appeared. Had it been otherwise the fullness of time must itself have come sooner. The period that just preceded Christ may have had characteristics very different from those of earlier

**THIS UNITY  
RECOGNIZED  
IN THE NEW  
TESTAMENT**

ages. The periods of a nation's life, like those of the individual human life, differ in many respects one from another, but it is the one life that throbs on through all the periods, from the first appearance of the nation among the peoples of the world down to the culmination of its history in the accomplishment of its service and mission to mankind.

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THIS unity of Israel's life is a fact of no little importance in itself, and its recognition is indispensable to any large and true view of biblical history and biblical revelation. The division of the biblical department in our theological schools into the two separate departments of the Old Testament and the New Testament was probably an economic necessity. But it would be nothing less than a disaster if it should lead to the feeling on the part of students of the Bible that the Old Testament and the New are two separate books belonging to two quite distinct periods of history and having but a loose connection one with the other. Not only must the teacher of the Old Testament know the New Testament, and the teacher of the New Testament know the Old Testament, but both of them and every student of the Bible ought to recognize the continuity of the history, the record of which begins in the one volume and is carried forward in the other. What we need alike as students of history and as theologians is not a fragmentary and disconnected knowledge of the Bible, nor even a knowledge of it in all its parts, but a knowledge of it as a whole, and in its true unity.

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IN the February number of this journal emphasis was laid upon the peculiarly divine character of Israelitish history. It was urged that an historical record in a special sense divine almost of necessity presupposes a history not less divine. Evidence was presented to show that Israel's prophets so conceived of the nation's history, and that the actual history especially when studied in comparison with other ancient history confirms their interpretation of the facts.

*THE OLD TESTA-  
MENT AND THE  
NEW MUST  
BE STUDIED  
TOGETHER*

*THE DIVINE  
ELEMENT IN  
ISRAEL'S  
HISTORY*

BUT this argument for the divine element in Israel's history becomes far stronger when we include in Israelitish history its New Testament chapters.

In the first place the very relation, already referred to, of the life and character of Jesus to the Old Testament history of Israel including the history of prophetic thought, is itself strong evidence of the existence of a divine element in the history. The older methods of stating the argument from prophecy may seem to us somewhat less than true to the facts, but there is a great truth at the heart of the argument, and this truth becomes clearer and more persuasive as we understand biblical history better. Without Jesus Christ Israelitish history is a torso; with him it is a splendid statue. Without him its great lines of thought and of event end in air; in him they converge as to a point, and reveal their true meaning. Is it an accident that he thus realizes, while he at the same spiritualizes and elevates, the ideals of the prophets? Is it a mere coincidence that he culminates and completes that which they began, but which without him is but a record of ruined hopes, and splendid ideals doomed to disappointment? Surely not. The relation between Old Testament history and New Testament history is one behind which there lies divine thought and divine power.

In the second place the matchless perfection of the character and teaching of Jesus, together with the unique and at the same time lofty character of his mission to the world, is a fact which cannot be explained unless we recognize a divine factor in the history that culminates in him. Waiving all question of the precise definition of his nature, the character and work of Jesus Christ stand out from all the record of history, demanding to be taken into account in any philosophy of history and refusing to be accounted for on any theory which either ignores God in history or so conceives of his methods of action as to reduce all that history to one unbroken plane.

*SEEN IN THE  
RELATION OF  
THE OLD TESTA-  
MENT TO CHRIST*

*IN THE PERFEC-  
TION OF CHRIST'S  
CHARACTER AND  
TEACHING*

In the third place the splendid and unparalleled achievements of that Christianity which owes its origin to Jesus, and which has been splendid in proportion to its fidelity to his teachings and its recognition of his authority, is a constant testimony to the divine factor in that history which finds its center and meaning in him.

*IN THE RESULTS  
OF CHRISTIANITY*

And let it be noticed that these three lines of evidence constitute not only an argument for the divine in the life of

*RELATION OF  
ALL THESE TO  
ISRAELITISH  
HISTORY*

Jesus, but for the existence of a divine factor in the entire history of which his life is an essential element. There is a very true sense in which Jesus would have been impossible without the history back of him. We are very far from maintaining that he was in a naturalistic sense merely the product of an evolutionary process—the evidence clearly proves the contrary. Nor is it necessary to emphasize that which is doubtless true in itself, that the best elements of that national character which had been produced by centuries of divine discipline appear in him elevated and idealized, so that he himself was what he was as a human being in part because he was born, not only of a woman, but under the law and in the fullness of time. Aside from any adaptation of Christ to his age by reason of the past history of his nation, it is transparently clear that the conditions under which he lived and, because the past centuries of Israelitish history produced these conditions, those centuries themselves also, were necessary to the accomplishment of his mission. But for the existing conditions and the centuries that preceded them his career could never have had the significance or the effect which it has had. The history and the Christ are mutually necessary parts of one whole. Without him Israelitish history is unintelligible; without Israelitish history the Christ that was is not only unintelligible but impossible. Apart from one another each is robbed of full half its meaning; viewed together, as they actually were, both are intelligible and both divine.

AGAINST such a recognition of a special divine element in the history of Israel it is difficult to see what valid historical evidence can be urged. To many minds, however, the evidence of the uniformity of the divine action in the world, especially in the realm of nature, so called, appeals so strongly that they find difficulty in admitting that God can have dealt with one nation in any other way than that in which he has dealt with every other nation. They hold that there can be nothing special in God.

*OBJECTION TO  
ANYTHING  
SPECIAL IN  
DIVINE ACTION*

AGAINST the supposition that God has dealt with different nations on substantially different principles, or even after radically different methods there is much to be said that is true and forcible. But surely the very historical evidence to which this argument appeals shows clearly that the uniformity of God's action is a fundamental uniformity, which includes a large element of variety of method and result.

*TRUE AND  
FALSE IN THE  
OBJECTION*

The successive geologic ages do not exhibit one unvarying uniformity of phenomena. There was an age when only physical and chemical forces were in operation. This was succeeded by an age characterized by the presence of plants and animals. Yet here again the uniformity contained within itself a large degree of variety. Higher forms of life succeeded to lower, and the successive ages were marked each by its own characteristics. Undoubtedly there is an orderliness of progress from age to age, a tendency to the attainment of an end. Perhaps all the phenomena may be traced back in some sense to one force, though the attempt to resolve vital into chemical forces has not yet, we believe, been successful. In any case, however, the unity of purpose and force includes a variety of method and manifestation.

*ARGUMENT  
FROM GEOLOGIC  
HISTORY*

Nor is this variety wholly a difference of successive periods. In the present age the divine force in nature expresses itself in a multitude of forms and realms. The conclusion to which the method of divine action in the physical universe points is not that there is no variety of method in God's action, no shaping

of various means to one great end, but that he acts uniformly in the sense that there is nothing capricious, irregular or anomalous in his action.

Nor does human history support the presumption that there can be no variety in the dealings of God with nations. Certainly

*ARGUMENT  
FROM HUMAN  
HISTORY*

every theist will maintain that all nations are under the care and guidance of God, that he is a great factor of every nation's history, and that he has dealt with all in accordance with his wisdom, holiness and love. Yet surely no Christian ought to find it difficult to believe that no nation liveth wholly unto itself, but that each has a mission to accomplish in the great divine plan that runs through the whole history of the race—a mission not for itself only, but for the world. Perhaps no historian is wise enough yet to discern precisely the peculiarity of God's work in and through each nation, but enough is clear to make it evident that there has been a large variety within a fundamental uniformity. The mission of the Greeks in art and philosophy, of the Romans in law and government, and of the Hebrews themselves in religion, are familiar and pertinent illustrations. The objection to a special divine activity of God in Israelitish history, in the sense of an activity different in form and mode of expression from that which was a factor in non-Jewish history, is based on a conception of the method of the divine activity in the world which is sustained neither by the phenomena of the physical universe nor by those of human history. Indeed it is refuted by both.

It may be urged that what we have maintained respecting the history of Israel really amounts to claiming not simply a

*ISRAEL'S  
HISTORY UNIQUE*

form of divine activity different from that exerted in the history of certain other nations, but one which is actually unique. This is doubtless true in the sense that through no other nation known to us has God so manifested himself in the highest attributes of his nature, those which we call moral, as he has through Israel, that facts unparalleled in the religious history of the world have occurred in the history of Israel, and that Israel has thus had in the domain



of religion a mission committed to no other nation. We claim thus for Israel a unique mission, and for her history a unique divine character, not in the sense that no other nation has had a divine mission, nor that in no other has there been any revelation of religious truth, but in the sense that the revelation to and through Israel, taken in its entirety, has so far surpassed that made to other nations in purity and clearness and finality, in those elements which make a religion permanent and universal, that it stands virtually in a class by itself. Israel's history is unique not in that Israel had a mission, but in that it had a unique mission.

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NOR can it be fairly urged that the history of the world or the phenomena of the universe at large prove or imply anything respecting the method of the divine government which should make it difficult for us to admit that Israel's history is in this sense unique. These phenomena and this history reveal not only a fundamental uniformity of divine action—but not less clearly what may be justly called the divine law of diminishing frequency. Various classes of phenomena do not occur with a uniform frequency. Events do not file past us as if they were set upon a panorama all parts of which move at the same rate of speed. In the realm of astronomy there are events that, to speak from the point of view of the observer on the earth, occur every twenty-four hours; there are others that occur once a month, others once a year, others at intervals so long that astronomical records can scarcely give us two occurrences of them. In the realm of human history this law is equally manifest. Moreover, here it is in general the great events that are most infrequent. Men of common clay are born every hour; truly great men are rare; men of the very highest ability, whether in literature, art, generalship, or statecraft, appear only at intervals of centuries. The uniformity of the world's history is a uniformity which includes a vast variation in the relative frequency of different phenomena. In the one direction this variation reaches the point of incalculable frequency; in the other it

certainly approximates, there is no reason to deny that it actually reaches, the point of absolute uniqueness. Indeed, it is almost in the nature of the law of diminishing frequency that the last term of the series should stand alone. It becomes, therefore, in every case of apparent uniqueness purely a question of evidence with no presumption whatever against the existence of the unique instance.

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BUT in the case of the history of Israel there is one special and strong reason why the evidence for uniqueness should be given its full weight. Of that history Jesus Christ is an integral element. He cannot be eliminated from the problem. Now by almost universal confession Jesus Christ is a unique figure among men. He may indeed be classed with prophets, moralists, leaders of men, founders of religions. But from them all he stands so far apart as to constitute an absolutely unparalleled phenomenon, a unique factor in human history. Israelitish history is unique in the very fact of the relation of this unique person to it. The national history that includes the life of Jesus Christ, of which that life is an integral element, the center in which all its lines converge and from which alone its true significance can be perceived, is by this very fact unique.

That Israelitish history is in a special sense divine appears from the comparison of Israel's pre-Christian history with that of its contemporaries among the nations. But it becomes many fold more clear when, including the New Testament chapters of the history and thus the person of Jesus Christ, we look at it from the point of view of the history of the world, and of Israel's mission in that history.

*ISRAEL'S  
HISTORY UNIQUE  
BECAUSE OF  
JESUS CHRIST'S  
RELATION TO IT*